

suspect that these species would nest here at an appropriate time. However, these birds were not seen again during a trip on October 7. By now, the chicks of all heronry birds had reached subadult proportions. Since the island is some distance away from the bund walls surrounding the pond from which observations can be made, it was not possible to ascertain the number of nests of each species on any occasion.

Other than the heronry, the wildlife value of Traj village pond has some other aspects too. On most of our visits we encountered quite high numbers of sarus crane, 68 in the shallow part of Traj pond on July 14 being the highest number. Other types of waterbirds viz, rails, kingfisher, ducks etc. were also seen here. Another interesting feature is the presence of mugger (*Crocodylus palustris*) in the deep part of the Traj pond (Vijaykumar 1997). On our visits five mugger were observed, of which three were large specimens (c. 3m) and two smaller individuals

(1.2-3m). However, we did not come across any instance of mugger predated on adult or juvenile birds of the heronry.

For ornithologically significant village ponds in the Ahmedabad region, a conservation and education strategy has been chalked out by Urfi and Nareshwar (1998). This plan envisages population monitoring of heronry birds and simple interpretation and community sensitization programs.

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## 10. INTERACTION BETWEEN SIBERIAN CRANE *GRUS LEUCOGERANUS* AND CHECKERED KEELBACK SNAKE *XENOCHROPHIS PISCATOR* IN KEOLADEO NATIONAL PARK, BHARATPUR

On July 1, 1997 while collecting information on the time budget and activity patterns of four released Siberian cranes *Grus leucogeranus* in the Keoladeo National Park, I noticed a crane hurriedly pacing up and down a distance of c. 10 m. Through my telescope I noticed a checkered keelback water snake *Xenochrophis piscator* holding on to the crane's face. The one metre long water snake had wrapped itself around the crane's neck. The crane tried hard to shake the snake off her face. She tried removing it by vigorously shaking her head and neck, and also with her feet. Three other cranes

foraging nearby stopped feeding and looked nervously at the affected crane that struggled for more than ten minutes, before the snake loosened its grip and dropped off. After the snake had left, the crane splashed water on her face and neck for some time and started preening. The other cranes also resumed their activities.

In 1996-97, the water hyacinth *Eichhornia crassipes* had choked most of the marshes in the Park because of which water snakes had become abundant. The Park Management was getting the hyacinth removed manually as part of the Park's

Vegetation Management. On an average, 10-12 workers involved in this task were bitten every day by water snakes (Park Director, *pers. comm.*). There were heaps of water hyacinth lying where the cranes were foraging. It is possible that the snake was lying in wait for prey.

Water snakes are known to be pugnacious, not letting go of their prey till it dies, but not strangulating it. They are known to feed on small mammals, birds, fish and amphibians (Daniel 1992, THE BOOK OF INDIAN REPTILES). The huge

pythons *Python molurus* present in the Keoladeo marshes could be considered as potential predators of cranes. I have not come across any reference on snake-crane interaction and think it is worth recording.

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## 11. TWO INTERESTING AVIAN RECORDS FROM KUTCH, GUJARAT STATE

This note concerns the occurrence of *Glareola pratincola* (Linnaeus) and *Monticola cinclorhynchus* (Vigors) in Kutch. Earlier records mention the occurrence of the former, but since the nineteenth century it has not been recorded in this region. In recent years, it has been seen in 1992 (Himmatsinhji, *JBNHS* 96(2): 316-317) and 1999. The latter has been recorded for the first time and it was seen on January 27, 1985 and March 9, 1999.

While MKH and SNV watched water birds from a location on the Bhuj-Pachham road (c. 30 km north of Bhuj) on October 18, 1992, a pratincole flew in and settled down on the marsh. Soon thereafter, a juvenile bird also came down nearby. We remained there for some time, but saw no interaction between them. These individuals had deeply forked tails, and from details of the adult coloration, observed through binoculars and a telescope, appeared to be *Glareola p. pratincola*. However, we preferred to wait for a good photograph or specimen to confirm our identification in the field.

We learn that Mr. Nitin Jamdar came across this species in the Banni grasslands and in the vicinity of Chhari dhandh (*pers. comm.*). Besides this, on March 29, 1999 SNV counted 25 *G. pratincola* at Chhari dhandh.

Stuart Baker (1929) made the only mention of the collared pratincole in Kutch, but it is not

clear on what authority or evidence he did so. Dr. Ferdinand Stoliczka was the first to collect bird specimens from Kutch. Apparently, Hume also collected information on the birds of this region, and also had specimens collected through his own sources. This was followed by a study of birds by one Hugh Palin, who prepared the first edition of THE BIRDS OF KUTCH in 1878, which was revised by Capt. C.D. Lester in 1904. None of these gentlemen, nor the Sálím Ali survey of 1943-44, make any mention of the occurrence of *G. pratincola*.

Stuart Baker also refers to the occurrence and breeding of *G. p. maldivarum* in Kutch and Sind. Taking into account all the references available to us, we feel there is now less likelihood of *maldivarum* occurring in Kutch. Roberts (1991) also mentions that there are no authentic recent sightings or records of this race in Pakistan. He further states that *G. pratincola* is met with mostly in lower Sind, particularly in Badin district along the border with India in the Great Rann of Kutch, and that too as a summer breeding visitor from East Africa. Gallager (1980) describes the collared pratincole as a passage migrant in Oman, the main passage being from August-October. That is after their breeding is over.

The water regime in the northwest part of the Great Rann (directly south of Badin in Sindh,